
Sunday 6th June – First Sunday after Trinity
Readings: 1 Samuel 8: 4-11, 16-20 & Mark 3: 20-end

1 Samuel 8: 4-11

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, 'You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.'

But when they said, 'Give us a king to lead us,' this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: 'Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.'

Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, 'This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: he will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots.'

Mark 3: 20-end

Jesus accused by his family and by teachers of the law

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'

And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.'

So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: 'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every

slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.'

He said this because they were saying, 'He has an impure spirit.'

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting round him, and they told him, 'Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.'

'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked.

Then he looked at those seated in a circle round him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'

Reflection

One of my favourite conversations in all of literature takes place in the Chronicles of Narnia between Susan Pevensie and Mr Beaver. After finding herself on the other side of the wardrobe door with her siblings, in a secret world that is held under the false authority of the wicked white witch, Susan enquires of Mr Beaver if Aslan the Lion, the true King of Narnia, is safe.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

A King who isn't safe but who is good. I wonder how we feel about that kind of King? We read in our passages from 1 Samuel and the Gospel of Mark, that both the Israelites and the pharisees reject the Kingship of Jesus. They do not want unpredictable. They don't want uncertain, they don't want a God that they can't control, can't always understand and can't predict. But rather, both seem to be looking for a King who is a reflection of their humanity. Shaped, in their image rather than the other way around. A King who feels safe.

Isn't that so often, if we're honest, the kind of King we are looking for? We want God to work on our time schedule, we want him to take notice and pay attention to the things that are most pressing to us. We want him to give us the things we are determined we need, and we want him to act in the interests we think are best. Our picture of the King is moulded into one that meets our needs, our tastes, our expectations. And yet as we read later in the Narnian tale, Aslan is King, but he is not a tame lion.

The King of Kings and Lord of Lords cannot be managed, cajoled, bribed or bartered with. He is not like us, he is not just a better version of humanity that we

have to try and aspire to, but rather he is other than us: *My ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts*, we read in Isaiah.

He is King. Not safe, but constantly and eternally good. And the pharisees missed it. The religious leaders, with their expectations, their traditions, their practices had an idea of what the Messiah should look like. And it wasn't Jesus. They missed him. He didn't fit their image of what God should look like, he didn't do things their way or in a way they could always understand, and so they rejected Him.

Where have I missed Him this week? Too busy looking for answers or affirmation for my own ways, my own thoughts and my own agenda, that I have missed this coming King, with his compassion, his comfort and his heart transforming love. This King who comes to us, not just to rule over, but rather He comes to be with us. Jesus, the True King looks at us today and calls us family. Brother, Sister, Friend. Will we receive His Kingship and walk in the ways of his Kingdom; to come alongside the broken, to extend our tables to those in need and to break down the walls of our hearts so that the crowds who are in desperate need of Jesus might be able to draw near.

His ways might not always look like our ways, or his thoughts be the things that we might think, but we can rest assured that his ways for us and his thoughts towards us are *always good*. They are always better than anything we could imagine for ourselves or for the broken world that He made and loves.

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